

AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

I. DEPARTMENT MISSION

The Department serves the citizens of Contra Costa County through effective and uniform enforcement of the California Food and Agricultural Code and the provisions of the California Business and Professions Code. The Departments primary goal is to achieve compliance with emphasis on education of the regulated community and progressive enforcement when violations occur.

II. MAJOR PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

A. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS

1. Enforce State and Federal quarantines. Inspect plants and goods arriving in the County for the presence of insects, nematodes, pest animals, diseases, noxious weeds, and seeds that are or might be detrimental to the property of the citizens of the County and to the agricultural industry of the County.
2. Eradicate infestations of exotic pests that threaten County residents and the environment.
3. Survey agricultural, commercial, and residential areas for pests and diseases not generally distributed in the County. Maintain traps to intercept new or serious pests of economic significance.
4. Monitor pesticide applications for compliance with State law. Review requests for restricted use pesticide permits and issue the permits if environmental and safe use conditions and concerns are met.
5. Enforce Worker Safety and other pesticide laws to ensure safe working conditions for employees who may be exposed to pesticides, to ensure compliance with environmental protection requirements, and to ensure safety to the citizens of the County.
6. Investigate all pesticide-related illnesses and complaints alleging misuse of pesticides.
7. Tabulate reports on pesticides used by growers, the pest control industry, and government agencies.

8. Register and inspect apiaries for disease and infestations and supervise the destruction of hives when necessary.

BUDGET: \$1,684,344

FTE: 21.2

B. CONSUMER PROTECTION PROGRAMS

1. Inspect nursery stock, fruits, nuts, vegetables, eggs and agricultural seed to ensure compliance with regulations and quality standards.
2. Inspect weighing and measuring devices such as gasoline pumps, taxi meters, electric meters, and retail store scales in order to insure accuracy.
3. Inspect scanners, pre-packaged consumer goods, and petroleum products to ensure compliance with regulations and accuracy of labeling.

BUDGET: \$513,031

FTE: 8.6

C. SERVICE PROGRAMS

1. Provide the public with information on control options for minor pests encouraging IPM and biological control techniques.
2. Administer a ground squirrel program to protect agricultural land, roadways, dams, levees, and other structures.
3. Control and eradicate certain noxious weeds to protect from damage and invasion into agricultural lands, parklands and open space.
4. Compile an annual crop and livestock report to show conditions, acreage, production and value.
5. Develop special reports for disaster relief purposes and to provide updates on local conditions for the news media.

BUDGET: \$365,596

FTE: 1.8

D. ADMINISTRATIVE/SUPPORT SERVICES

1. Provide employee development through training, mentoring and participatory management.
2. Provide personnel, payroll, and fiscal administration, department clerical supervision, and automated systems services.
3. Develop policy and direction to meet mandates and respond to local needs.

BUDGET: \$625,261
FTE: 4.6

E. DEPARTMENT DATA

BUDGET: \$3,188,232
FTE: 36.2
PIE: 19

CLASS	ALLOCATED POSITIONS
Agricultural Commissioner-Director Weights & Measures	1
Executive Secretary	1
Clerk – Experienced and Senior Level	2
Chief Deputy Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer	1
Deputy Agricultural Commissioner	4
Agricultural Biologist III	3
Agricultural Biologist II, I, or Trainee*	11
Pest Detection Specialist – Project	16
Glassy-winged Sharpshooter Specialist - Project	5
Supervising Weights & Measures Inspector	1
Weights and Measures Inspector III	1
Weights and Measures Inspector II, I or Trainee*	5

* FLEXIBLY STAFFED BASED ON TIME & NUMBER OF LICENSES.

EMPLOYEE PROFILE

	Male	Female	Total	Percent
Caucasian	13	19	32	69.6
Hispanic/Latino	3		3	6.5
African/American	3	1	4	8.7
Pacific Is/Asian	3	3	6	13
Native American		1	1	2.2
Total	22	24	46	100

III. DEPARTMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS

1. High Risk Exclusion work continues with early morning quarantine inspections of all express carriers. This facilitates industry's need to expedite deliveries and improves our ability to intercept potentially devastating exotic pest organisms. In 2002 our Biologists performed over 37,371 exclusion inspections and wrote 385 rejections. Fifty-nine of these shipments contained pest species that are not known to occur in California an additional nineteen shipments were found with pests that do not occur in Contra Costa County. These pests have a significant detrimental potential to our agriculture and urban landscaping.
2. The Glassy-winged Sharpshooter (GWSS) presents a threat to agricultural crops, backyard fruit crops and landscape plants. After two years of an intensive eradication and monitoring program, we were very pleased this August when the California Department of Food and Agriculture declared eradication of an infested area in the Garin Ranch subdivision in Brentwood. We directly attribute this success to quick action taken on the part of the Board of Supervisors authorizing treatment of properties within the infested area and the extremely high level of support from the homeowners of the Garin Ranch subdivision. As the result of the early action and cooperation only one treatment was necessary on the residential properties. Contra Costa County is the first quarantined county in the State to have accomplished eradication of Glassy-winged Sharpshooter.

This was the third year of the exclusion and detection program. Our inspectors successfully intercepted five nursery shipments with viable GWSS egg masses. These shipments were destroyed or returned to origin. Two adult Glassy-winged Sharpshooters were trapped in a retail nursery in East County. This nursery was

immediately treated at the owners' expense. Through our Department's efforts six potential infestations in Contra Costa County were averted.

3. The Department has been active in the development of a County-wide Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy and Plan, including a pest services contract for all pest control in the County. The Department Head serves as co-chair of the IPM Task Force Committee. Agriculture staff have played a major role in drafting a workable policy and model contract for services to be used Countywide. After review and modification by the IPM Task Force Committee the Board of Supervisors approved an IPM policy resolution. Our staff has conducted three workshops for 87 participants as part of an outreach effort to support this program.
4. The Department participated in the development of four workshops for school maintenance workers on Integrated Pest Management in public schools covering landscape and structural pests. Twenty-four participants completed various sections of the training. Participants took part in field training and materials were given to the attendees that will be useful guides for applying the techniques to pest management at their school facilities. The training was offered as part of a Department of Pesticide Regulation grant.
5. In addition to numerous outreach training sessions on a varied subject matter including plant disease, pesticide safety and pest exclusion, five pesticide field worker safety and pesticide handler training sessions were given in Spanish to 159 agricultural field workers and four sessions, two in Spanish, were held for regarding pesticide laws and safety for 121 landscape maintenance businesses.
6. The California Department of Pesticide Regulations annually performs an effectiveness evaluation to determine the quality of our Pesticide Use Enforcement program. The Department met all essential elements in the effectiveness rating. This is the twelfth year in a row that our pesticide program has achieved a high level rating.

B. CONSUMER PROTECTION PROGRAMS

1. Completion of a new Vapor Meter Inspection Laboratory has allowed us to better serve industry and the public. At the same time a small amount of revenue is generated through device registration fees to support our Weights and Measures program.

2. The device registration collection procedure and computer-tracking program were modified making the process much more user-friendly and time efficient.
3. The number of retail petroleum devices inspected per hour sharply increased the last two years over historic levels. This is due to the purchase of a specialized inspection vehicle that greatly facilitated the inspection process. Historic levels of inspection hovered around 2.9 devices inspected per hour. The inspection rate jumped to 4.64 inspections per hour over the last two years. Besides being more time efficient the inspection procedure is safer for our inspectors.
4. A major consumer case against an office supply company was settled. The case originated through a complaint from the public. It eventually involved the cooperation of the District Attorneys of three counties, one city attorney plus investigations from weights and measures personnel of twenty counties and State Division of Weights and Measures. The judgment against the company totaled \$375,000, of which the D.A.'s office received \$85,800 in civil penalties. Our Department received \$8,317 in investigative cost recovery.

C. SERVICE PROGRAMS

1. A Weed Management Area formed to manage and eradicate noxious weeds has completed its fifth year. This is a multi-stakeholder task force working cooperatively through a memorandum of understanding. The Agricultural Commissioners of Contra Costa and Alameda counties co-chair the task force. The intent is to coordinate invasive weed management activities, provide education regarding control techniques and provide opportunities to qualify for State and grant funding of educational and control projects. Funding is administered through the two Departments of Agriculture. This year through a cost-share grant, 1,992 acres of yellow starthistle were treated in three watershed areas of the County. Satellite populations of oblong spurge, giant reed, pampas grass, perennial pepperweed, and cape ivy were also treated.

Two other grant funded innovative projects have been implemented. One involves human labor to remove noxious weeds, reduce fire hazard and improve wildlife habitat. This project is in the Oakland-Berkeley Hills. The other project involves the attempted eradication of a population of medusahead grass using controlled burns and revegetation.

Other major achievements included the development and publication of an invasive weed activity book. Two thousand copies have been distributed for use by elementary schools and public agencies. Outreach efforts have included thirteen presentations attended by 470 persons. The invasive weed presentations were given to the public and agencies. Six community college interns have assisted in the mapping of noxious weeds. We have instituted a Weed Free Forage information and certification program.

D. ADMINISTRATIVE/SUPPORT SERVICES

1. Entering into a service contract with Department of Information Technology continues to work extremely well in dealing with troubleshooting, technology updates, and the general technological help on computer-related issues and problems. Our technologist has become very familiar with the departments programs and needs and therefore has become an invaluable asset to the Department.

IV. DEPARTMENT CHALLENGES

A. INTERNAL TO DEPARTMENT

1. Providing the right type and balance of training necessary to keep existing staff current on issues and regulations, while at the same time keeping staff in the field to meet program workloads, the Department is charged with a wide array of complex functions. Almost two-thirds of the staff are state-licensed professionals. Staff training and development are essential to maintain our staff at a high standard.
2. Providing adequate and qualified staff for seasonal program demands.
3. Meeting mandated inspections in Weights and Measures has been especially challenging due to a budget reduction of one position compounded by the six-month loss of one Inspector due to extended maternity leave.
4. Developing staff expertise necessary to keep computer systems running effectively and efficiently.
5. Developing effective e-government options that will benefit the regulated community as well as the citizens of the County.

6. Training new staff to achieve the high level of quality work that is required in the inspection and enforcement arena.
7. Developing the expertise to work with emerging issues such as air and water quality, endangered species, agricultural preservation and new technology.
8. Addressing Sudden Oak Death, a devastating disease that has killed many oak trees in Northern California, which was first reported in Contra Costa County in July 2002. Contra Costa County was placed on the list of federally regulated counties July 10, 2002. Nurseries and other businesses that export nursery stock out of state must be sampled and brought under compliance agreement. Public inquiries on this disease have increased and staff has given three informational workshops to 85 industry professionals.
9. Prioritizing workload has been necessary to meet requirements during a time when budgetary constraints limit staffing options.

B. INTERNAL TO COUNTY OPERATION

1. Keeping aware of other Department/Agency mandates and working with them to meld complimentary programs.
2. Development of a Countywide Integrated Pest Management policy through the IPM Advisory Task Force.

C. EXTERNAL TO COUNTY OPERATION

1. Expanding local efforts to resolve Ag/Urban interface issues.
2. Preserving a viable agricultural industry and working with the Agricultural Land Trust.
3. Addressing environmental issues involving endangered species, water quality, and habitat preservation.
4. Addressing concerns over invasive weeds in agricultural and open space areas with reductions in available funding.
5. Responding to changes that circumvent established inspection procedures.
6. Responding to budget cuts in the most effective manner possible.

V. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

A. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PROGRAMS

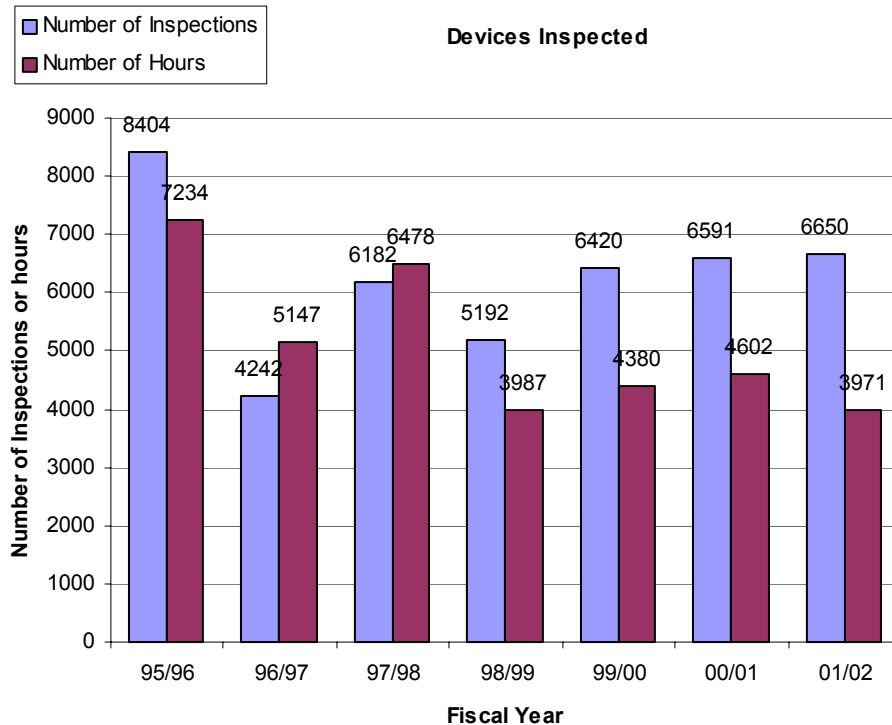
1. Staff has consistently intercepted a higher percentage of infested shipments than would be anticipated by their workload. The chart below shows that shipments of household goods that come from gypsy moth infested areas of the Eastern parts of the country. Contra Costa County receives more shipments than one might expect with just short of ten percent of the statewide total of statewide shipments. This is due mostly to the mobility of many of our County's residents that are in high-level management positions. Our pest interception rate on these shipments demonstrates the high quality of inspection work done by our Biologists.

Gypsy Moth Inspections	Household Good	Quarantine Pest
2002 Data	Shipments Inspected	Interceptions
Statewide (including CCC)	1,920	7
Contra Costa County	158	2
Contra Costa County As a Percent of the State	8.2%	28.6%

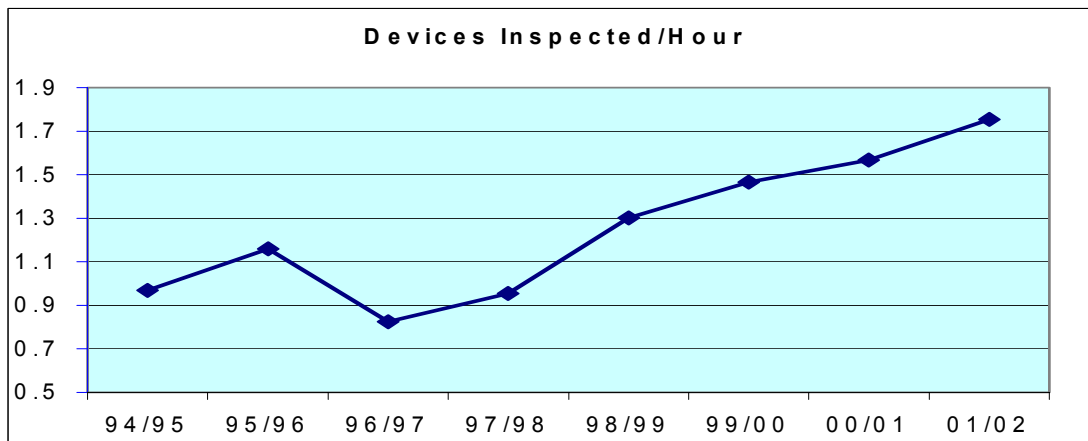
Interceptions of exotic pests on incoming shipments are critical to the prevention of infestations that may be very costly to eradicate. Exclusion is our first line of defense in the protection of our County from these devastating pests.

B. CONSUMER PROTECTION PROGRAMS

1. The number of weights and measure devices inspected relative to the hours expended on this program continues at a high rate. This is a reflection of staff efficiency that is involved in the program. Lower overall hours expended in this program is due to staffing shortages.



This chart reflects continued increase in staff efficiency due to a focused training program that started in 1996.



C. SERVICE PROGRAMS

It has been the Department's goal to reduce and eliminate artichoke thistle and purple starthistle that are federally rated noxious weeds. By the 1970's Contra Costa County had one of the heaviest infestations of these

weeds in California with over 100,000 acres infested. Since 1979 the Department has gradually worked to control these weeds in most areas of the County adding new sites as workload permits. Work includes spot treatment of historically infested sites to eventually deplete the reservoir of residual seeds that continues to germinate for up to twenty years. All historically treated parkland, rangeland and open space areas were surveyed and treated. In addition, the Department treated new areas in East Bay Regional Park's Wildcat Canyon under contract to help them reclaim their open space from artichoke thistle. Approximately 35% of this extremely heavily infested park is now under the treatment program, and 72 additional net acres were treated in 2002. The Department completed the third year of a contract with Mt. Diablo State Park. All of this parks 20,000 lightly infested acre were surveyed and treated. The long-term goal for the artichoke and purple starthistle noxious weed program is to increase or maintain gross acres treated while net acres treated declines as populations are reduced.

Our Department provides technical assistance to the public and agencies on the proper control methods for ground squirrels. We also perform work at cost to protect agricultural settings, highway and railroad rights-of-way, flood control creeks, water canals, County maintained roads, reclamation districts, sanitation plants, city parks and open space areas for homeowners associations. The demand for assistance continues to increase each year.

	Artichoke Thistle		Purple Starthistle		Ground Squirrels	
	Acres Treated		Acres Treated		Acres Treated	
Year	Net	Gross	Net	Gross	Net	Gross
1995	87	64,316	186	8,692	371	939
1996	130	66,096	329	16,725	934	12,575
1997	136	71,256	289	18,822	1,546	25,915
1998	204	62,163	120	11,825	1,351	32,944
1999	271	80,726	205	25,737	1,867	8,993
2000	177	84,878	166	17,215	1,632	11,592
2001	243	98,029	131	21,628	2,092	15,595
2002	193	75,779	50	14,303	3,058	13,454

The control of noxious weeds helps to reclaim and protect land from pests that render it unusable for continued agricultural and open space enjoyment.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FUNCTIONAL CHART

